

CAB's Beef Cattle Specialists

Shifting focus to share opportunities in the marketplace.

by *Miranda Reiman*

Supply is one of the most limiting factors in the amount of *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand product sold. That's why Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) set up its Supply Development Team to reach as many producers as possible. Just how the company goes about this task has changed over time.

The Feedlot-Licensing Program (FLP) began in 1999 with a kind of "backdoor" approach.

"We focused on that point of concentration with the industry as an area where we felt we could influence the most cattle efficiently," Mark McCully, director of supply development, says. "We still believe that and

continue our efforts within the feeding sector, but we realize that this industry is still very segmented."

To reflect developing responsibilities, CAB feedlot specialists Paul Dykstra and Gary Fike, transitioned to "beef cattle specialists" in June.

"The title change is really just representative of the evolution that we've been making for several years," McCully says. "We know we can't just focus at the feedlot level and be successful in growing supply fast enough."

Sharing information

In addition to their FLP responsibilities, the two specialists have begun reaching out to seedstock producers, allied industry representatives, and cattlemen's and Extension groups.

"We simply want to share the opportunities that exist in the marketplace for cattle that excel in feedlot performance and carcass traits," Dykstra says. "Anything we can do to bridge the information gaps will build a higher-quality product in the end."

Although market signals are being sent through the system, sometimes they need to be accompanied by education.

"My goal with Angus seedstock producers is to help them embrace the demand or pull-through effect that comes from the packer and the feeder," he says. "As much as some

folks want to pretend that a black hide is the answer to premiums or profit, we want to

clarify that. It's really the quality and performance that the Angus breed has come to represent that created this demand in the first place."

CAB reaches commercial cow-calf producers through their bull suppliers, the feedlots they work with, and Extension and cattlemen's groups.

"We're trying to work with folks to help them find out the true value of their cattle," Fike says. The team shares information on retained ownership or ways to get carcass data back on calves, even if the ranch of origin doesn't own them through harvest.

"At the commercial level, we can identify what management practices are either missing or working well to get those calves the biggest advantage in carcass traits, health and nutrition," Dykstra says.

Bringing people together

Coordinating relationships up and down the chain is a CAB specialty, McCully says.

"The really forward-thinking seedstock producers are trying to find a customer for their customer," Fike says. "If we can aid in that regard, it will benefit everybody." He says the company can connect cattlemen with feedlots that share their production goals.

McCully adds, "We want to educate that cow-calf producer about the value-added production opportunities that exist and how they can market those calves to capture the value they've added."

Getting producers involved with the AngusSource® program is one example.

"That requires better relationships and an in-the-field type of approach to get those things coordinated," he says.

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— *Mark McCully*



Paul Dykstra

Gary Fike

Dykstra will move to western Nebraska sometime this year to be closer to his target audience, as he covers areas in the North and West. Fike is responsible for the South and East and most of Kansas.

The supply development team takes its message to the masses by partnering with other quality-focused companies, too. CAB is then able to reach these allied industry partners' existing customer bases.

"Most of the time we all have the same goal of creating more profit for cattlemen," Dykstra says. "That can be through a health-related product, nutrition or better management strategies."

Those companies also have more field staff and a "deeper penetration out in the field," McCully says. Some of these partnerships help increase the scope of programs like the Feeding Quality Forums and regional Black Ink Basics and Brand Builders seminars.

All of these relatively new initiatives will have no effect on the existing FLP. Fike says

the longer a feedlot has been licensed, the less personal attention they require, yet the more effective they become in coordinating supply for the brand.

"All of the yards that have been with us for a number of years have the mechanics down. We don't field the number of questions we used to," Fike says.

Dykstra sees the shifting focus as positive all the way around.

"This move strengthens the potential of our licensed feedlots, since we'll be doing more to address the common goals of each sector," he says, "profitability."

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